

Confirmation chapter 2

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Summary: Morgan faces some disturbing and strange hours on his own, beeing lost from his team...

Confirmation chapter 2

Just after the break of day, Baines and Walman started to rig down the tent, getting ready to leave the nights camp. "I still don't like it!" Baines muttered: "Moving the camp to the other side of the dune-top and hiding our tracks was one thing, but to leave him alone outdoors... He's gonna tell..." Walman grinned. "Come on, Baines. Admit it. You had as good a laugh as I. D'you see his face when I broke that twig? He probably climbed up a tree for the night, - when he stopped running. He'll be round soon." They finished packing, and strapped their gear to the L.T.V. "Come on, let's go get him, OK?" They drove back to the first campsite, stopping on the ridge where Morgan could see them. "What did I tell you? There he is." Walman pointed towards a lone dark-clad figure squatting beneath a tree, with his Mag-Pro over his knees, watching them. "Get a move on, Martin, we don't have all day!" Walman shouted, and the figure under the tree rose slowly, taking his time, scanning them suspiciously. "Get in!" Baines gave him a shove when he finally came up to the vehicle, pushing him into the backseat. Morgan winced, pulling his gear out from underneath him, studied it, and put it in his pocket. "Home. sweet home!" Walman smiled: "Back to base, twenty-four hours R&R, and a hot shower." He gave full throttle, and they took off in a spray of gravel and dust.

Morgan woke an hour after dawn, feeling stiff, cold and hungry. It took a few moments before he remembered where he was, and the truth hit him like a ton of rocks. He was alone! Walman and Baines had moved the camp, he was lost and had no way of communicating with them, having lost his gear. He bounced up from his bed: If he could find the inventorylist... Searching the entrance area, he found the papers he was looking for, stuck between the door-frame and the wall. Apparently, this pod mainly contained mechanic spareparts, clothes, food, tents, blankets and medical equipment. "Just my luck. No electronic spareparts. No gears." He dumped down on his blankets

again, rolling himself up into fetus position, giving up. He hated being alone. He hated being here! Hated it! He closed his eyes, thinking of Bess for comfort. Imagining her arms around him, giving him strength and comfort, and he felt a little better. When they first had crashed down on this dustball, he hadn't even dared to look outside the pod. Just the thought of what horrors could be waiting for him out there numbed him with fear. He hadn't even been off his home-station before they had 'kidnapped' him, during their pre-launch of the Roanoak. He hadn't even been to the docks, let alone left his quarters for more time than absolutely necessary, before he met Bess. He was created for a life in the service of the council, not for surviving outdoors on a uncivilized planet full of penal-colonists, Terrians, Grendlers and deadly Kobas! He was a bureaucrat. His world should consist of computers, list-checks, gourmet meals, hot bubble-baths, the latest fashions, gossip, surveillance of work, not actually doing it. That sort of things. Even though he had to admit that the muscle he had put on since coming here, looked good on him... But Bess had opened the pod-door, and happily gone out into the new world stretching out before her, wide-eyed with wonder and curiosity, searching for food and water, enticing him to follow her, a little step at a time. "«Bess...»" He moaned low, missing her real presence. "«Help me!»" He must have had dozed off, because the sun was shining in through a thin crack in the broken welding seam of a corner, telling him it was way past noon. He was hungry, but even the mass of real food, stacked from floor to ceiling didn't stir his appetite. He chewed down a piece of a energy-biscuit, knowing he had to eat. "«I got to be sick.»" He sighed, tossing aside a can of 'Beef and potatoes in cream-sauce, with greens', which he just a few hours earlier would have given his right arm and leg for. Even the beer he dreamt of no longer seemed important to him, now that he had found cags of it. He had food enough to last him for years, but no appetite. When he didn't show up at the campsite last night, Baines and Walman was shure to think the Grendlers had gotten him, and when he didn't show this morning either, they would go looking for the remains of him, following the trail of firewood. They maybe even found the life-pod. If they looked for him. After all, it was their fault that he got lost in the first place. If they hadn't moved the camp, this would not have happened. It was probably Walman's idea, being the 'practical joker' of the two. They had probably been hiding somewhere nearby, to see his reactions when he found the camp gone. Having a field day, no doubt. Bess had chided him more than once for not taking back with them. But not even she could understand why he let them taunt him. Let them pay him back for being a selfish coward... A station bureaucrat... Or what ever he was. He didn't understand it himself, so how could she? He shook free of the feeling, and forced himself to move about. He needed to go, too... Carefully he unlocked and opened the door of the pod, peering outside through the crack. Nothing moved, so he opened the door properly, letting in air and light into the gloomy place. He hurried round the corner, and then hurried back again, having forgot to bring some toiletpaper. The ground around the pod was covered with Grendler-tracks. Apparently they'd been there all night, trying to find a way in... Morgan felt the hairs rise on his head; And they most certainly would be back tonight, in larger numbers! Slamming the door shut behind him, he dove into his blankets, hiding. "«What ever did I do to deserve this.»" He whimpered, pulling the coarse fabric over his head, shutting the world out, seeking refuge in his dreams, but not finding it. Memories of childhood nightmares invaded him with unrelenting certainty, and he found himself back on the station, in the nursery.

Waking from a bad dream, the baby Morgan dared not move, afraid that he'd wake the 'demons'; Those matted black nurse robots, with their glowing, red eyes. They were always there, in the dark, waiting for him with their three-fingered, claw-like hands. As long as he didn't move, they left him alone, hiding in their shadows in their 'resting mode', but as soon as they detected he was awake, their eyes would suddenly come alive with a low hiss, and they would come gliding silently towards him through the dark, claws waving in the air, reaching for him...

Struggling free from the blankets, he grabbed the torch, turned it on, and searched through the deep shadows of the supply pod, breathing in gasps, trying to calm down. Even after he had grown up and moved to a place of his own, those eyes seemed to peer out at him from every dark corner of his rooms ever so often. But whenever he turned on the light, they were gone. His nerves somewhat calmed, Morgan turned off the light, saving the batteries. Pulling his blanket up to his nose, he curled up against the wall, drifting off into another memory.

His first day in school. He'd been nervous and excited, wanting to learn so much. In school you could learn everything! He found his seat in the back of the classroom, looking about him. There were a lot of grownups there as well as other children, but he didn't pay it much attention. Not until one of the grownups forcefully pulled her son away from the desk next to him, leading the boy to another desk up front, hissing to the teacher that she did not pay her sons overly high school fees for having him sit next to one of them! The teacher had nervously shuffled through her papers, found what she was looking for, and with a suddenly stiff and pale face had apologized to the lady. Morgan had not understood what she ment, but he understood who. He had no mum and dad, so what? The other kids at his dorm had no parents either. Did that make him less than the others? He shure was smarter than any of the other kids, he defended himself to himself: Hadn't he learned to read and do advanced math's on his own, without anyone knowing or teaching him? Wasn't that why they let him start school a year earlier than he should have, when they found out? And now he was going to learn to write as well. And all the other fun stuff the big kids got to do when they started school. Waking from his thoughts, he found he was sitting alone at the backrow of the class. All the other parents had moved their children too... A pang of sorrow suddenly gripped the little boy, sending tears to his eyes, but he didn't cry. He knew better. With a sense of reality beyond his years, he understood that this was how it was going to be from now on, so he'd better get used to it.

Morgan moaned, and shifted slightly under his covers, half awake. His entire childhood was something he had tried his best to forget. He hadn't spoke about it, even to Bess. Even his teachers had held his, to him, unknown origin against him, for what ever reason. As if a child is responsible for who his parents are, or not. As a grownup, he just wanted to forget all the humiliations, the sidious remarks from his teachers, the bullying, everything. Just putting it all behind him, concentrating on his job. Getting on with his life. Starting over. But no. Even his new colleagues seemed to know something he didn't. Apparently it was wrong of him to be good at what he was doing, and most certainly was it wrong that he had graduated from university three years ahead of his class, with the best grades ever achieved by a student his age, and then getting a

senior position as a first job. He was wrong. For some reason he got the feeling that it was his very existence they opposed against. Not wanting to deal with the reality, the young Morgan had started hiding in V.R. Dreaming his days away, secretly putting credits aside, planning on one day to get away from the station, the whispers, the mysterious disappearances, the mistrust and hate... The Council who owned him. With a jerk, Morgan woke. He looked about him in the darkness, trying to remember the dream. He only got a hold on the edge of it, wrinkling his forehead, puzzled. "Disappearances?!" He said out loud, then shook his head, seeing the glowing, red eyes before him. He got up, and eased the door open. The sun was about to set in a couple of hours, and it reminded him of the Grendlers. They were shure to come back again as soon as it got dark. "I need some sort of defense." He muttered. "I'm unarmed, and they're shure to come in numbers this time." He grabbed the inventory-list, scanning it carefully in the light from the torch. There. A advanced security-system. It could work like a perimeter-alarm, couldn't it? It would be better than nothing. He grabbed his torch with his left hand, holding the list in the other, and started to make his way into the depths of the pod, searching for the equipment. Luckily, most of the goods still stayed in its numbered space, but some had broken free on impact, and lay scattered all over the place. After about a half an hour, he found what he was looking for, and started the arduous work of dragging it towards the exit. "You moron!" He smacked himself on the forehead, and started back for the door without the gear. Soon he was back with a trolley, loading all he needed onto it, and pulled it with him with ease. Deploring his find just outside the door, he started working on putting up his 'perimeter-defense system' right away. The most difficult part was climbing up on the roof, spreading out the solar-cell tarp to catch as much as possible of the setting sunlight, and to mount the powerful halogen-lamps to the four corners of the pod and some of the trees at the perimeter border. Being wary about heights, getting up and down was a struggle, since he found no ladder, and he almost fell a couple of times too. The sun was tilting towards the horizon, when he finished his work by turning on the electricity, waiting the few seconds of tormentuos silence while the batteries loaded the condensers, and then got the power converted to a higher frequency. Would it work? Was there enough power in the cells? "Yesss!" Seeing the familiar, faint-blue light emerging with a electric humm, stretching between the trees he used for poles around the perimeter, he cheered silently. He broke the light with a stick, and a horrible wail from within the pod told him it was functioning perfectly. But how did you turn this thing off?! He gave himself a silent curse, reminding himself to smarten up! Wasn't it about time he learned to calculate the outcome of what he did, not just setting things into action, expecting others to clean up after him, never giving the result a second thought? Never considering what could go wrong, as well as what could go right? Again he blamed it on his bureaucratic way of thinking. It took him another good half hour to figure out the reset sequence, and the siren finally fell silent. Quite pleased with himself, he went inside the pod, and turned on the light, powered by the sun-tarp. The entire inside of the pod got lit up by powerful overhead lamps, which gave him the opportunity to search the place thoroughly. He found a crate full of navigation equipment, and some spareparts to the L.T.V.'s, TransRovers, and A.T.V.'s. "That would please Danziger." He mumbled to himself, leafing through a repairs manual. But what caught his interest most though, was some unlisted crates, stacked just inside the door of the pod, some of them secured with heavy padlocks and Digi-locks. "Well, well, well... Seems my

boss was right after all. Contraband's, most likely... And I never found them, no matter how 'thorough' I searched!Â» Morgan grinned, and bent over the nearest crate, gently touching the Digi-lock, springing it open. The heavier padlock came off just as easily, with a little help of a powerful pair of thongs. A gasp of surprise left him as he lifted the lid. Â«Mag-Pro's!Â» He didn't like the thought of what, or who they were intended for. Even if he knew about the crates, he didn't know about this! He would have to tell Danziger about them, no doubt, so they could take their precautions. He carefully lifted one out of the crate, placing it by the door after making shure it was fully charged. Then he locked the trunk, setting a new code for the Digi-lock. The next trunk held more interesting stuff: cigarettes and alcohol, which was highly illegal, nude-magazines of different sorts, (-right up Baines'es alley, they were...) V.R.-games of extreme violence, sex, and other 'specialties', a long, black, low cut, body-tight silk dress, with shoes to go with it.... He measured the dress with his eyes, then he carefully wrapped it into a wad of checkered, colorful cotton cloth, then he packed the dress and shoes into a knapsack he had found, along with some jewelry and a pearl necklace. He smiled to himself, already seeing Bess wearing it. It would be his delayed wedding gift. The next crates revealed some vintage vines, inlayed fruits, genuine chocolate, and a lot of other goodies. He decided to keep that last trunk to himself, if possible. After all, it was he who'd found it, and it didn't belong to the inventory of the pod, now, did it? In his mind, he was already planning his big surprise candle-light dinner for Bess, when he got back to the base camp... Then he remembered. He wouldn't get back. He was lost. They had left him behind.

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